

# New Year's Immersion: Tantric Rituals & Tantric Meditation Rudra Yaga

Rudra is *prana shakti*, the vibrant life force. This intelligent energy pulls us out of inertia, makes us vibrant and energetic, and puts us on the path of inner fulfillment and freedom. It is represented by Rudra—the most energetic form of Shiva—emerging from the primordial fire. Intent on filling the universe with life force, Rudra performs his cosmic dance. In response, the goddess of immaculate love, beauty, and bliss emerges, and the union of the two fills the universe. It is in *this* universe everyone and everything lives and thrives.

Rudra Yaga is one of the most ancient and pristine rituals for accessing Rudra Shakti, the life-sustaining force within and without. The masters in our tradition access this shakti in three different ways—*kaula*, *mishra*, and *samaya*. Kaula is a purely ritualistic path, whereas samaya is purely yogic. The yogis following the method of mishra combine rituals with meditative and pranayama techniques. Each of these paths has its own unique characteristics.

The ritualistic path of **kaula**, if followed while observing the precise rules of tantra, bears fruit almost instantly. The rituals are elaborate and require the recitation of thousands of mantras unknown to casual seekers and practitioners. The preparatory steps to the ritual-heavy Rudra Yaga are lengthy. They consist of invoking the benevolent forces of nature which govern, guide, and nourish the functions of earth, water, fire, air, clouds, lightning, and seasons. These same forces nourish and guide our body and mind. The preparatory rituals invoke and help us connect with the forces that preside over constellations, zodiac signs, stars, planets, the four directions, time, the laws of cause and effect, and ultimately, the all-pervading force that holds the numberless aspects of nature together in harmony. Each step of these preparatory practices is accompanied by the recitation of mantras and intricate ritual offerings. The main course of Rudra Yaga begins only after these preparatory practices have been completed.

The **samaya** method of Rudra Yaga is totally opposite to the ritualistic method. Here, a yogi is led to awaken *kundalini shakti* at the *muladhara* chakra, located at the perineum. With the help of pranayama and mantra japa, kundalini shakti is then brought to the *manipura* chakra, located at the navel center.

Samaya is the specialty of the Himalayan Tradition. We are taught to take extreme precautions not to get distracted during the upward journey of the vibrant energy from the muladhara to the manipura. Finally, we are taught the precise method of meditating at the manipura chakra. In the tantric tradition, the manipura chakra is described as the center of fire. The fire here is a miniature cosmic fire, the ultimate vortex of the life force. Rudra Yaga at the navel center opens the floodgates to experiencing the divinity that embodies the inexhaustible life force. Only after we have gained access to the navel center and become fully established there are we taught how to meditate on the crown center, which subsumes all other chakras. The system of Rudra Yaga in the samaya school of tantra uses the human body itself as an altar, and all rituals are completely internalized.

# New Year's Immersion: Tantric Rituals & Tantric Meditation Rudra Yaga

The **mishra** method of Rudra Yaga combines ritualistic kaula and yogic samaya. In this system, the purpose of rituals is to awaken the forces of nature and guide them to awaken the power that lies dormant in the various chakras. A specific segment of rituals and the power engendered by them awakens the inherent power of the first three chakras and brings it to the heart center. This process frees us from fear, doubt, insecurity, and grief. It infuses us with self-confidence, self-trust, courage, and determination. Other parts of the rituals awaken the forces inherent in the higher chakras, mainly the center between the eyebrows. This frees us from confusion and the cravings that create turmoil from inside. Finally, the main course of Rudra Yaga commences.

At the outset, most students in our tradition are led through the disciplines of mishra, which combine both the ritualistic approach of kaula and the yogic approach of samaya. The reason for this is that the anatomy both of the mind and of the pranic force, which pervades and permeates every nook and cranny of our body, is so subtle that it is an impenetrable mystery. Therefore, the practice of samaya is difficult for most seekers in the beginning. Ritualistic practices are somewhat easier. The majority of tantric texts are ritual manuals. Learned tantrics break lengthy rituals into smaller steps, and rearrange them in a manner conducive to accomplishing the intended goal.

Once the ritualistic portion of the practice is fully firm in the mind, we can apply the same procedure to awaken and become fully connected to our inner core. Unlike the internal practice of Rudra Yaga, a group of adepts and aspirants can participate in the ritual-driven practice of Rudra Yaga. This group practice creates a collective consciousness that is transforming both at a micro and macro level. In the past, whenever society was suffering from upheaval and unable to supply the nourishment necessary for stable health, wealth, peace, and happiness, adepts and aspirants undertook mega-sized group practices such as Rudra Yaga. In this way enlightened souls restored peace to society, brought nature into balance, and created an environment where people can live without fear and sorrow.

## The Main Course of Rudra Yaga

The main course of Rudra Yaga consists of mantra recitation and fire offerings. Unlike meditative mantras, the Rudra Yaga mantras are lengthy. There are 123 Rudra mantras, which are divided into six parts. The first part consists of 6 mantras; the second, 16 mantras; the third, 6 mantras; the fourth, 12 mantras; the fifth, 17 mantras; and the sixth and final part, 66 mantras. Memorizing these long and often difficult-to-articulate mantras is a challenge. However, once we are able to recite them from memory, our brain and mind will not be able to disobey the commands of our soul.